

## Bee-Centric Beekeeping vs Human-Centric Beekeeping

There are many different ways to be a beekeeper. Debates between beekeepers on best practices are common and can create much contention, even among like-minded beekeepers.

The following is a list of my personal “Natural Beekeeping” practices vs Conventional Beekeeping. These are by no means standard among natural beekeepers, but most of these practices are indeed common among natural beekeepers.

Bee-Centric Beekeeping	Human-Centric Beekeeping
<p><i>Alternative names for Bee-Centric Beekeeping: Bee Guardianship, Bee Stewards, Natural Beekeeping, Treatment-Free Beekeeping, Natural Bee Husbandry, Apiculture, Backwards Beekeeping, Organic Beekeeping.</i></p>	<p><i>Alternative names for Human-Centric Beekeeping: Conventional Beekeeping, Beekeeping.</i></p>
<p>1. Treatment-Free: No chemicals, antibiotics. Some say no organic chemicals or essential oils as well.</p>	<p>1. Pro-treatment: use of everything from miticides and antibiotics to organic acids to treat bees for mites and other pathogens. Usually results in killing-off weaker mites and breeding for stronger treatment-resistant mites.</p>
<p>2. Feed: Avoid feeding bees altogether. Do not use sugar unless in an emergency. Feed bees local, raw honey-syrup mixture instead. Add herbal bee-tea mixture suggested by Spikenard farms for nutritive support.</p>	<p>2. Harvest too much honey and feed bees sugar-syrup/corn-syrup replacement. This harms the digestive system for the honeybee, including raising pH levels in the gut and effecting lactic acid bacteria.</p>

Bee-Centric Beekeeping	Human-Centric Beekeeping
<p>3. The right to build natural comb. Allows bees to draw out their own comb, free of plastic foundation and regulated cell size.</p>	<p>3. Hives forced to build comb on plastic foundation. This foundation is usually coated with wax melted down from old treated comb that is usually filled with pesticides and residue from treatments.</p>
<p>4. Minimal intervention: Less is more. Learning to observe and listen to your bees from the outside of the hive is key.</p>	<p>4. Regular inspections and manipulations of hive.</p>
<p>5. Allow the Queen to be sovereign. Allow her free reign of her hive. Let the bees decide when to replace her. Only replace her if she is truly infertile and the bees have not raised a new queen.</p>	<p>5. Kill the old queen once a year and replace with new queen. Use of queen excluders to limit her movement in the hive, and thus limit her ability to lay eggs in upper supers. This creates an upper chamber of honey supers that are easy for beekeeper to harvest.</p>
<p>6. Minimal honey harvest. Bee stewardship is not about honey. Harvest honey if/when there is a true surplus, it benefits the hive to create more space, or if/when you loose a hive.</p>	<p>6. Profit-first mentality means honey becomes the goal.</p>
<p>7. Breed for strong genetics. Source bees from feral colonies, hive splits or swarms from strong colonies with good hygienic practices. Work with local treatment-free beekeepers to help create and support local mite-resistant stock.</p>	<p>7. Bees are bread more commonly for temperament and honey yield. Often bees bred to be larger and produce larger cells, creating more space for honey storage. Larger bees are more susceptible to disease and varroa. Feral bees are often much smaller.</p>
<p>8. Minimal use of bee smoker, if any at all. Smoking bees stimulates the sense of a forest fire and bees return to hive to consume honey and retreat to the deepest recesses of the hive. It “calms” them down, but also potentially causes stress.</p>	<p>8. Regular use of bee smoker.</p>

Bee-Centric Beekeeping	Human-Centric Beekeeping
<p>9. Leave your bees in one place. Try not to move the hive unless you must for the sake of the hive's survival.</p>	<p>9. Many conventional and traditional beekeeping practices involve frequent moving of hives. This is a tricky area as there are many old folk traditions involving migratory bee practices. My rule of thumb is this: european honey bees generally live in trees. In the wild and trees don't walk around. Look to nature for your cues.</p>
<p>10. Let bees be bees.</p>	<p>10. Make bees benefit humans/over-manipulate bees in hopes of their survival.</p>
<p>11. Let the bees raise their own drones to their liking.</p>	<p>11. Cull drone comb to help reduce varroa population (varroa breed more in larger cells and drones are raised in larger cells). Also culled to encourage rearing of drones who don't "do" anything for the production of honey. More workers = more honey.</p>
<p>12. Allow the bees to swarm naturally. This is an incredibly powerful, orgasmic event of reproduction and optimism. Sometimes it's because the bees are too cramped, so pay attention to the space you've provided. In general, swarming is the natural reproductive instinct of a healthy colony in the spring.</p>	<p>12. Swarm suppression so that the beekeeper doesn't loose half of his/her "work force"</p>
<p>13. Locate hive in pesticide free area</p>	
<p>14. Let queen thrive untouched</p>	<p>14. Queen mutilation, marking and wing clipping. Killing and replacing queen yearly.</p>

<b>Bee-Centric Beekeeping</b>	<b>Human-Centric Beekeeping</b>
15. Talk to you bees & listen to hum of life.	13. Plenty of conventional beekeepers do this too! We all love our bees. Conventional beekeepers are not “wrong” or “bad”. It is a matter of approach. Conventional beekeeping is a result of the industrial revolution, Big-Ag and mechanization. There are many conventional beekeepers who truly love and take care of their bees, and believe treatment and frequent hive manipulation is what serves them best. We must all agree not to shame one another and do our best to trust our gut, educate ourselves and be willing and open to new idea and information as it arises.